**Welcome to ICDA**

Students involved in Congressional Debate follow the procedures of our Senators and Representatives in Washington. They write legislation, work in committees, and debate their own bills and resolutions. Speeches are judged, points are accumulated, and both individual and team trophies are awarded by point totals and student voting.

Legislation is classified in three areas: Foreign Affairs, Economics, and Public Welfare. At an invitational Congress a school may submit one piece of legislation in an assigned area. This bill is submitted at the previous ICDA tournament. Students have about one month to prepare research; a total of 12 bills are debated at each tournament.

The host school divides the entries into chambers of about twenty students. Each coach is asked to indicate previous experience for each student on his/her entry form, and the host school attempts to balance each chamber with beginners and experienced speakers. The theory is that the beginners will learn from the more experienced speakers. A set of rules can be found on this wiki.

In Illinois there are typically three sessions. At the beginning of the first session, members of each chamber select the three candidates for Presiding Officer who serve for each of the three sessions. At the end of the Congress, students in each chamber will vote on who was the Best PO, 1st Place Speaker, and 2nd Place Speaker. Highest total points determine the Critic’s award.

Congressional Debaters strive to debate extemporaneously by constructing 3 minute speeches that are persuasive, contain cited evidence that support their points, and refute the previous speakers. A 2-minute question and answer period follows each speech so that speakers must have an understanding of the issue at hand, and must be able to think on their feet. They are scored on content and style.

One of the most rewarding outcomes of ICDA are the relationships that develop between the teams that participate on a regular basis. This is a powerful competition, and yet just as in most political venues this form of debate requires students to maintain positive relationships even when there is disagreement. Not only are students learning about important issues, learning how to debate and develop arguments, they are learning how to negotiate through communication and cooperation.

ICDA hosts 5 invitational tournaments, a fall training workshop, and a state competition every year. The 5th competition of the year is an approved TOC bid tournament.

Contact any ICDA oversight member to learn of the advantages for your students and school by becoming a member of the Illinois Congressional Debate Association (ICDA).